

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Mike Quigley (IL-05) and Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL) urged support for a new tourism proposal unveiled yesterday by Senator Kirk and a bipartisan group of Senators. The Jobs Originating through Launching Travel (JOLT) Act would reform outdated visa laws and create jobs through increased international travel to the U.S. The legislation is co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of Senators including Senator Kirk, Charles Schumer (D-NY), Mike Lee (R-UT), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Roy Blunt (R-MO).

“Poland is an incredible diplomatic partner for the United States, and their designation for visa free travel would provide valuable tourism revenue to Chicago and many other cities across America,” **said Congressman Quigley**. “By passing this bipartisan legislation, we can improve national security while improving our nation’s bottom line, a win-win situation.”

“Despite its strong support for the United States, Poland remains one of the only major democratic U.S. allies to be excluded from the Visa Waiver Program,” **said a spokesperson for Senator Kirk**. “This legislation would fulfill the President’s commitment to a strong democratic ally and bring Poland into the Visa Waiver Program while providing a needed boost to America’s tourism industry. Tourism supported more than 100,000 jobs and brought more than \$10 billion to Illinois last year alone. Common sense updates to the Visa Waiver Program are overdue and this bipartisan approach should move through Congress quickly.”

A key provision of the JOLT Act championed by Congressman Quigley and Senator Kirk is the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to include U.S. allies, such as Poland, frozen out under the current framework. Currently, Poland is the only member of the 25-country Schengen area not able to travel to the United States under the VWP, which allows citizens of selected countries to travel to the U.S. for 90 days without a U.S. visa.

On March 7, 2011, Congressman Quigley and Senator Kirk introduced [bicameral, bipartisan legislation to update and modernize VWP requirements](#), ultimately making Poland and other U.S. allies eligible to participate in the VWP. On May 28, 2011, during his inaugural visit to Poland, President Obama endorsed this legislation. In January 2012, Congressman Quigley and Senator Kirk [traveled to Poland](#) to discuss ways to further enhance the U.S.-Polish partnership, including advancing the VWP legislation. The JOLT Act is scheduled for a hearing on Tuesday, March 27th in the Senate.

Rep. Quigley has been a staunch advocate for expanding VWP and [recently testified before Congress](#) on the benefits of including Poland and other diplomatic partners. The Polish government repealed its visa requirement for U.S. citizens traveling to Poland in 1991.

Illinois' 5th Congressional District is home to more than 100,000 citizens of Polish ancestry. More than one million Poles call Chicago home, the highest concentration of any city outside of Warsaw.

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